

April 30, 2021

**Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program
Semiannual Section B.1 Report on Section 312 Evaluation and Metrics
For the Period from October 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021**

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B.1.A. SECTION 312 EVALUATION PROGRESS

Virginia's most recent evaluation began in the fall of 2014 with the Virginia CZM Program responding to 36 evaluation questions regarding administration of the program, protection of coastal habitat, coastal hazards and sea level rise, coastal water quality, coastal-dependent uses, public access, governmental coordination, and descriptions of major achievements and challenges. NOAA then conducted an online survey of Virginia CZM stakeholders and partners, and in May 2015 conducted interviews of key partners on identified target areas. A public meeting was held on May 12, 2015.

Stakeholders interviewed by the NOAA team described the program as *partner-oriented* and *having effective partnerships with local communities and regional and non-profit groups*. "Flexible to meet the needs of locals" and "inclusionary" were some of the ways stakeholders expressed partnership demonstrated by Virginia CZM.

The three target areas identified by the NOAA team to evaluate the Virginia CZM Program were: 1) Restoring and Protecting Coastal Habitats and increasing Public Access, 2) Ocean Planning, and 3) Coastal Resilience. Preliminary accomplishments and recommendations identified by NOAA in each target area are as follows:

Restoring and Protecting Coastal Habitats and Increasing Public Access

Accomplishment: The Public Access Authorities are providing a new tool for public access acquisition and management through a local policy framework enabled by state legislation.

Accomplishment: The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program's place-based restoration efforts have been highly successful, leveraging significant funding from partners and resulting in "on the ground" coastal habitat improvements.

Progress This Period (October 2020 – March 2021):

Work is now underway to secure two sites in Northampton County on the Bayside. One site involves two lots adjacent to Picketts Harbor Natural area Preserve and the other a conservation easement on 31 acres of maritime and relatively old growth forest on a freshwater "lake" adjacent to Chesapeake Bay. These acquisitions will leverage significant funding from Virginia's Land Conservation Fund. See Section A reports for FY19 and 20 Task 9.

Although we had expected to spend funds on acquisition of lands for the Chickahominy Tribe, Virginia's General Assembly allocated \$3.5M for the Tribe to acquire the 944 acre Mamanahunt property where in 1614 the Tribe signed a peace treaty with the British. We expect to use FY21 Section 306A funds to construct amenities on that property such as a canoe/kayak launch, interpretive signage and perhaps traditional overnight accommodations – a sort of long house called "yehakins."

VA CZM's three-year focal area (October 2017 – Sep 2020) on Promoting Oyster Aquaculture was completed during this period. The sister effort on Sustainable Ecotourism was continued into the next Focal Area on Resilience ((October 2020-September 2023) with an added emphasis on ensuring the resiliency of the ecotourism industry and its infrastructure.

Program visibility was also included in this focal area, ensuring that acknowledgement signs for projects that VA CZM has funded over the years are still in place, and updated as needed. Work continued through this period on these efforts with a project granted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to update signage at Chippokes State Park – particularly with regard to tribal history. Work was delayed but is expected to gear up this spring on signage at the Virginia Beach boardwalk highlighting marine debris, wildlife protection and ocean planning. Additional grants are expected to be submitted soon for 306A documentation approval to update signage at New Point Comfort in Mathews County and in Northern Neck and Richmond Regional.

A dedication ceremony was held on November 2, 2020 to celebrate the completion of the FY17 restoration of a public access walkway on the Seaside of VA's Eastern Shore that was constructed with CZM funds in 2004. The boardwalk restoration is complete as is the signage

Ocean Planning

Accomplishment: The VA CZMP's leadership in regional ocean planning has brought together diverse stakeholders to plan for the location of future offshore facilities while minimizing user conflicts and impacts to coastal resources.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the VA CZMP to continue its leadership role in regional ocean planning and to plan for how the work will move forward over the next five years, including continued emphasis on ways to diversify and leverage funding.

Progress This Period (October 2020 – March 2021): The CZM Program Manager continued to lead several ocean planning efforts for the Mid-Atlantic. She continued to serve on the Steering Committee of MARCO's Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (MACO). Throughout this period, the Virginia CZM Program Manager continued work on a grant to The Nature Conservancy to develop an offshore wind siting tool (see FY 19 Task 94.02 Section A report). She also continued to lead the Marine Debris Work Group and MARCO's Ocean Mapping & Data Team. Links to documents produced by those two groups are in the FY20 Task 1.01 Section A report for this period.

The Marine Debris Work Group continued work on its \$149k grant from the NOAA Marine Debris Program to expand Virginia's balloon release reduction social marketing campaign to the entire Mid-Atlantic region. Monitoring of balloon debris was slowed somewhat this period due to COVID but picked up again this spring. Data from these monitoring efforts are being added to the MARCO Ocean Data Portal under the Water Quality theme. The work group finalized messaging ideas with the 3 Mid-Atlantic aquariums (NY, Baltimore and VA) the national

Aquarium Conservation Partnership. Work began on planning for the July 20-22 Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Summit.

The VA CZM Manager continued to serve as the Virginia representative on MARCO's Management Board. Materials developed by MARCO are available on the MARCO website at <http://midatlanticocean.org/>.

Coastal Resilience

Accomplishment: The VA CZMP's leadership in coastal resilience has enhanced the capacity of local partners for adaptation planning and promoted the use of living shoreline approaches to enhance community and ecological resilience.

Recommendation: The NOAA Office for Coastal Management recommends that the VA CZMP further define the program's "niche" as it relates to coastal resilience.

Progress This Period (October, 2020 – March, 2021): The Virginia CZM Program continued to address this recommendation by focusing its efforts on building coastal resilience in two key areas identified in the Section 309 Coastal Hazards Strategy. The Strategy targets community resiliency (the built environment) and shoreline resiliency (natural and nature-based features). Projects funded through the Strategy should ultimately lead to new enforceable policies that advance coastal resiliency in these two areas. Resilience-building projects are also being funded through the Virginia CZM Program's current Resilience Focal Area, which includes support for regional activities through additions to the technical assistance grants of the eight planning district commissions, as well as three other projects (see below).

Seven resilience-related projects are currently underway for FY 20.

- Evaluating the impacts of flooding on road network access in coastal Virginia (309 Hazards Strategy)
- RAFT evaluation for Middle Peninsula Localities (309 Hazards Strategy)
- Expanding participation in the community rating system (309 Hazards Strategy)
- Utilizing Planning District Commissions (PDCs) to Advance Ecosystem and Community Resilience (CZM Focal Area Grants to 8 coastal PDCs)
- Conservation Targeting for Resilience (CZM Focal Area Grant)
- Promoting Ecotourism to Support Conservation of Conserved Lands and Resilient Communities (CZM Focal Area Grant)
- Climate-Adaptive Nearshore Natural and Nature-based Restoration Projects in the York and Piankatank Rivers and Mobjack Bay (CZM Focal Area Grant)

In addition to the resilience projects funded, Virginia CZM Program staff are also helping to support the work of the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). CZM staff support the Finance, Federal Installation Partnerships, and Project Identification Subcommittees of the TAC as Staff Advisors. This role was formalized through Executive Directive 13 in November 2020, which directed the Virginia CZM Program to report

directly to the Commonwealth's Chief Resilience Officer (the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources) on matters of coastal adaptation and protection and to provide technical support as necessary to develop and implement the Plan. Follow the link below for details on the TAC.
<https://www.naturalresources.virginia.gov/initiatives/technical-advisory-committee-for-coastal-resilience/>